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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL NUTRITION CONFERENCE

The Interagency Committee on Nutrition Education and School Lunch (ICNESL) is reviewing the types of nutrition programs and materials that have been effective in promoting dietary improvement. At a recent meeting the Committee considered the present dietary situation, the shifts made in the past 10 or 15 years, and some of the contributing forces. ICNESL members thought this background information should be shared with the readers of the Nutrition Committee News.

DIETARY PROGRESS IN THE PAST DECADE

The Dietary Situation

An important and heartening observation for nutritionists is that in the past decade diets of many people in the USA have moved closer to recommended nutrition levels. The nutritive value of national per capita food supplies gives evidence of over-all dietary improvement (1).¹ Surveys show that in general the families with the poorest diets improved their diets most (2).

According to three nation-wide family dietary surveys that serve as bench marks, diets of urban families were better in the spring of 1948 than in the spring of 1942 and diets of urban and rural families were better in 1942 than in 1936. The 1948 survey covered city families only. Spot studies in farm and village communities indicate that dietary improvement has been general and that rural families shared in it.

1948 picture.—Progress from the time of the earlier studies is noted especially in the B-vitamins, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and protein. However, there was no nutrient for which all diets met recommendations. Calcium was most frequently short, indicating the need for more milk and milk products. Only 60–70 percent of the diets provided recommended amounts of calcium whereas about 80–90 percent provided recommended amounts of other nutrients.

Better diets and higher incomes were associated. However, even among families with incomes of \$7,500 and over, some diets were short in important nutrients.

Shifts between 1942 and 1948.—Diets improved in part because incomes had increased more than food prices. Families in the lowest income third still fared

least well but showed most improvement. Higher real incomes allowed them more meat, poultry, eggs, citrus fruit, and fresh vegetables in 1948 than 1942.

Spread of enrichment also contributed to the relatively greater improvement in the diets of city families in the lowest income third between 1942 and 1948. Diets of families with incomes between \$1,000 and \$2,000 contained about 15 to 20 percent more iron, thiamine, and niacin than they would have without enrichment of flour and bread. At higher income levels, enrichment added somewhat less because diets were nutritionally better and flour use was lower. Riboflavin was increased relatively little by this enrichment because another food—milk, supplied about half of the riboflavin in the diets.

Other findings from the 1948 survey.—(1) Winter, spring, and fall diets were rather similar in nutritive value and somewhat better than summer diets. (2) Families with children had diets fairly similar in nutritional quality to those with no children. (3) Small families fared better than large families. (4) Families in which homemakers had more schooling achieved better diets at lower cost than others of similar size and income.

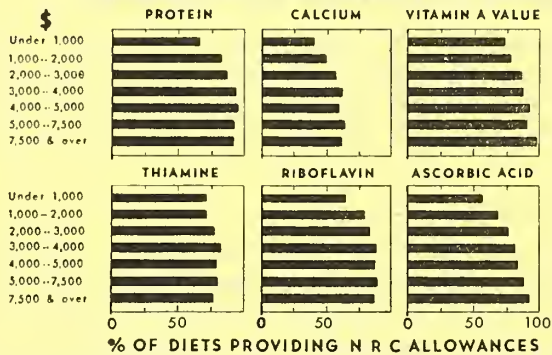
Contributing Forces

Better and more available food supplies.—In 1950 large per capita supplies of food were available for purchase and civilians consumed more nutritionally important foods, such as milk, eggs, poultry, and green and yellow vegetables, than in 1940. These increases in consumption plus the inauguration in 1941 of white flour enrichment, the spread of enrichment to cornmeal and other grain products, and the rise in the voluntary level of fortification of margarine with vitamin A helped to raise the per capita amounts of calcium, iron, vitamin A value and the B-vitamins in 1950 food supplies.

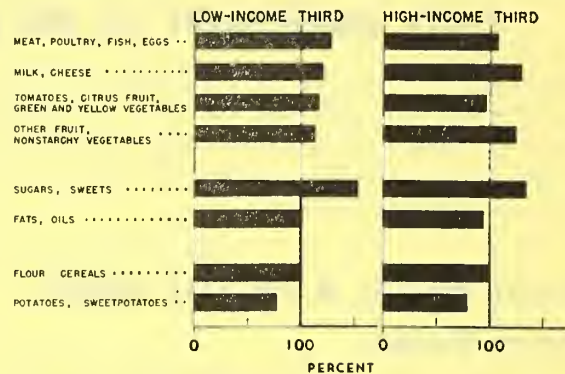
¹Italic numbers refer to References Cited, p. 4.

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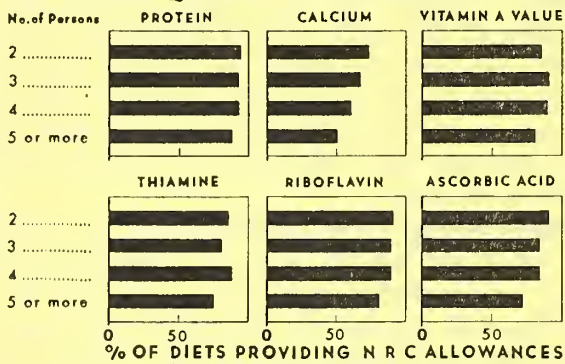
INCOME* AND ADEQUACY OF FAMILY DIET^Δ



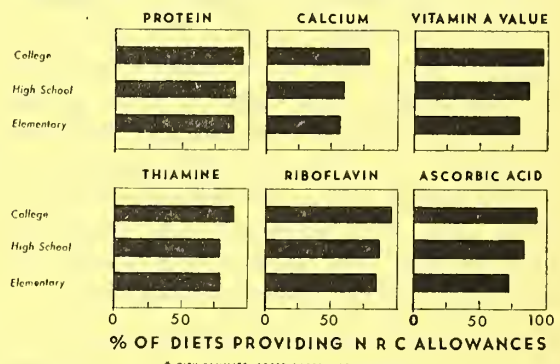
FOOD CONSUMPTION, SPRING 1948 AS PERCENT OF 1942



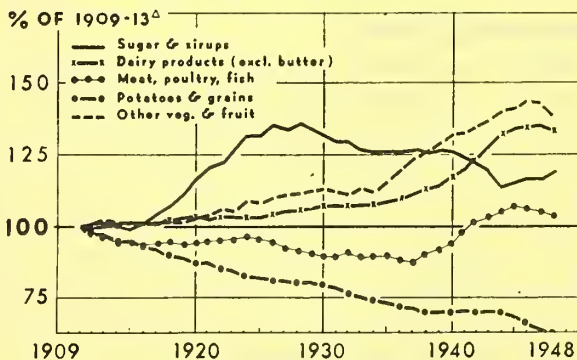
FAMILY SIZE AND ADEQUACY OF FAMILY DIET*



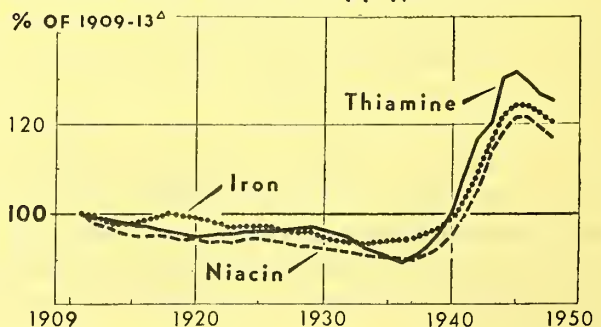
EDUCATION OF HOMEMAKER* AND ADEQUACY OF FAMILY DIET



FOOD CONSUMPTION*

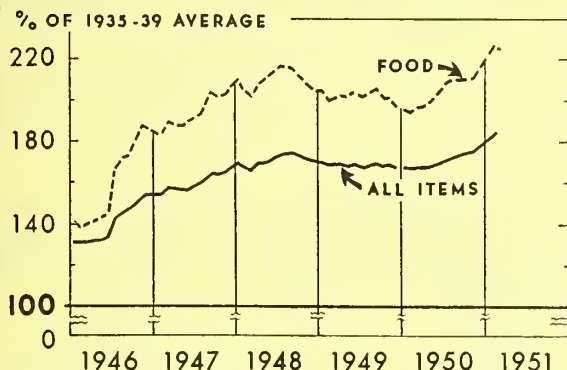


THIAMINE, NIACIN, IRON In National Food Supply, 1909-50^Δ



DIETARY SITUATION

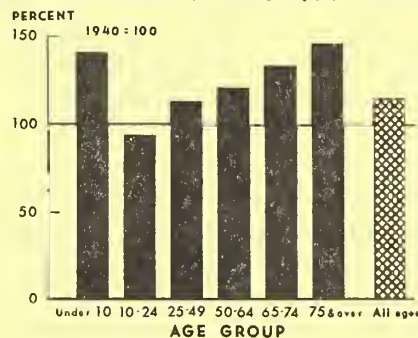
CONSUMERS' PRICES



NOTE: BEHAVIOR CHARTS ARE DATA COLLECTED AND WITH DATA RELATIVE TO 1935-39 AVERAGE. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR. SOURCE: BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS.

NEG. 9290-D

POPULATION CHANGE BY AGE GROUPS FROM 1940 TO 1950



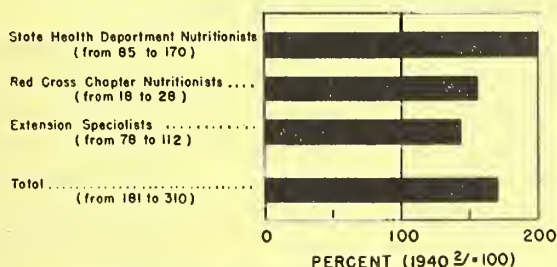
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 6.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEG. 9289-D

BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS

SPECIALISTS IN FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION IN SELECTED AGENCIES, 1950^{1/} and 1940^{2/}



^{1/} Or sometime between July 1, 1948 and June 30, 1951.

^{2/} Or sometime between July 1, 1940 and June 30, 1941.

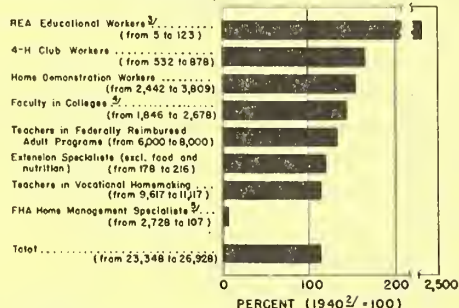
Source: U. S. Federal Security Agency, The American National Red Cross, and U. S. Department of Agriculture, published and unpublished data.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS

HOME ECONOMICS WORKERS IN SELECTED AGENCIES, 1950^{1/} and 1940^{2/}



^{1/} Or sometime between July 1, 1948 and June 30, 1951.

^{2/} Or sometime between July 1, 1940 and June 30, 1941.

^{3/} Employed by Rural Electrification Administration Borrowers.

^{4/} Includes some food and nutrition faculty not possible to separate.

^{5/} 1947 County Farm Management Supervisors also share in Farmers Home Administration program to help families produce and conserve adequate food supplies.

Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture and U. S. Federal Security Agency, published and unpublished data.

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BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS

Every year the National School Lunch Program reaches more children.



Federal cash reimbursements to schools were initiated in 1944.

Since that date the program has doubled in the number of children participating.

EACH SYMBOL REPRESENTS 1,000,000 CHILDREN ENROLLED IN SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

Source:

The National School Lunch Program 1948-49, Production & Marketing Administration

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BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS

Charts may be obtained from the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, (NPS), U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

To order charts--

1. List negative number, title and size
2. Enclose check or money order payable to the "Treasurer of the United States."

Photographic prints are:

8 x 10 inches \$0.50 each

11 x 14 inches \$0.90 each

Many vegetables and fruits, once highly seasonal, have become more available throughout the year, even in small and remote communities, as a result of better roads and trucking facilities, and new and improved ways of processing, packaging, and holding foods.

Although not taken account of in estimates of nutritive value, food supplies may have improved also from such innovations as precooling of fruits and vegetables, faster transport and cooled carriers for perishables, refrigerated display cases, and prepackaging of foods in the field or at the market. Probable changes in home practices, such as quicker cooking of vegetables in less water, plus use of liquids from canned and cooked vegetables and of dark green outer leaves of lettuce and cabbage, may also have made diets better.

Increased buying power.—Incomes have risen faster than prices, on the average. Average per capita disposable income went from \$536 in 1939 to \$1,336 in 1950, a rise of 149 percent (3). Consumer prices increased 73 percent for all commodities and 115 percent for food in large cities in the same period (3). Price rises have, of course, worked hardship on some families, particularly those with low fixed incomes.

Longer schooling, especially of homemakers.—Between 1940 and 1947, the average number of years at school for women 20 to 24 years advanced from 11.0 to 12.2 and for men 11.0 to 11.7 (4).

More and better nutrition education.—Education, intensified and unified by the National Nutrition Program, has made more people aware of what constitutes a good diet. More teachers, in and out of school (5), probably carried a nutrition message during the past decade than ever before. Better initial training of teachers, advances in nutrition knowledge and education methods, and greater effort to keep teachers up to date have made possible more effective teaching.

Emphasis on adapting the program to the needs of people "where they are, as they are," has increased. More and more groups of people needing special attention have been located by means of dietary surveys.

The higher birth rate and the longer life span (6) have influenced the development of educational materials and programs geared to the different dietary needs of expectant and nursing mothers, infants, families with children, and the aged. Repeated findings that many children and workers start their day with a poor breakfast or none has led to emphasis on better breakfasts.

More and better school lunches.—Each year

since 1946 when the National School Lunch Program started on a permanent federal basis, the number of children getting school lunches has risen (7). The Type A lunch, which gives the average child one-third or more of daily nutritional recommendations, has increased faster than Types B and C, which provide less.

The trend toward employing as top school lunch personnel those who meet definite job requirements and the increasing cooperation of health, physical education, and home economics teachers, parents, and others in the community have undoubtedly bettered school meals. Federal aid—money, plentiful foods, foods rich in nutrients often short in children's diets, and consultant service—also has contributed to the improvement.

New nutritional knowledge.—Research findings which have influenced diets during the past decade include the relation of the prenatal diet to the health of mother and infant and the teeth of the child, and the association of obesity with shorter life expectancy and increased incidence of diabetes, arteriosclerosis, high blood pressure, and related cardio-vascular diseases. Recent recognition of the importance of liberal quantities in each meal of foods important for good-quality protein, such as milk, eggs, or meat, should have a greater influence in the next decade.

Other circumstances.—Among other developments which have helped to better nutrition during the past decade are: (1) Extension of rural electric power lines making cold storage facilities for food possible in more homes; (2) increases in the number of commercial food lockers and home freezers in use; (3) development of food preservation centers for family and institution use; and (4) renewed emphasis on iodization of salt. Fluoridation of water supplies, a rather new practice, promises to become more widespread in the next decade.

REFERENCES CITED

1. Supplement for 1949 to consumption of food in the United States, 1909-48. U. S. Dept. Agr. Misc. Pub. 691. 1950.
 2. Nutritive content of city diets. 1948 and 1949. U. S. Bur. Human Nutr. and Home Econ. Spec. Rpt. 2. 1950.
 3. Economic indicators, May 1951. Council of Economic Advisers, Exec. Off. of the President.
 4. Current population reports. Population characteristics. U. S. Bur. of the Census Ser. P-20, No. 15. 1948.
 5. Largely unpublished data from U. S. Fed. Security Agency, U. S. Dept. Agr., and Amer. Red Cross.
 6. 1950 census of population. Preliminary reports. U. S. Bur. of the Census Ser. PC-7, No. 1. 1951.
 7. School lunch and food distribution programs. Selected statistics, fiscal years 1939-50. U. S. Prod. and Mktg. Admin. 1950.
- Address for Government agencies: Washington 25, D.C.